

Indigenous vegetables in Ghana: distribution and consumption patterns

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Abstract

Indigenous vegetables (IVs) may make up only a small proportion of the greens consumed in Ghana as the market is mostly dominated by locally produced exotic types. These IVs could be essential sources of nutrients to improve the nutrition security of most rural dwellers usually with relatively high nutritional deficiencies. A cross-sectional descriptive survey (Google forms, $n=345$; and at community-level, $n=1028$) was used to assess the types of IVs, their frequency of consumption, preparation preferences and the potential benefits ascribed to them by consumers. The survey included respondents from each of the sixteen regions in Ghana. The most common IVs consumed were cocoyam leaf, corchorus, baobab leaf, garden egg, okro, roselle, and kenaf. Among the vegetables daily consumed, the selected IVs constituted, on average, 46%. The range of respondents consuming IVs on a daily basis varied per the region, from 0.36% (Savannah) to 5.2% (Upper West). Daily consumption of IVs was 33% (teenagers); 36% (youth); 31% (adult) and 37% (aged) per each group. The IVs were generally wet-cooked and consumed as stew (sauce) or soup; and this may have implications on nutrient availability in terms of losses and bioavailability. Some reasons for not consuming IVs were non-availability, lack of (economic) access and non-familiarity. Consumption of IVs was reported to “give blood”, “give energy/strength” and aids in digestion. Generally, the consumption of IVs is relatively low compared with the exotic types. A catalogue of selected IVs will be developed to increase and disseminate knowledge on their nutrition and health benefits.